



**SOUTH  
KESTEVEN  
DISTRICT  
COUNCIL**

## Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

7 October 2021

Report of: Councillor Robert Reid

Cabinet Member for Housing and  
Property



## Disabled Facilities Grants 2020/21

This report provides a review of the Disabled Facilities Grant programme during 2020/21.

### Report Author

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Corporate Priority:	Decision type:	Wards:
Housing that meets the needs of all residents	Regulatory	All Wards

Reviewed by:	Ken Lyon (Assistant Chief Executive)	2 August 2021
Approved by:	Gary Smith (Strategic Director, Commercial and Operations)	28 September 2021
Signed off by:	Councillor Robert Reid (Cabinet Member for Housing and Property)	28 September 2021

### Recommendation (s) to the decision maker (s)

- Notes the outcome on the delivery of Council's Disabled Facilities Grant programme during 2020/21.

# 1 The Background to the Report

- 1.1 The Council has a statutory duty to provide financial assistance to disabled people to provide a range of essential adaptations to their home through a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG). These are available to owner occupiers, private sector tenants and housing association tenants and must be supported by a Lincolnshire County Council Occupational Therapist (“OT”). Applications for adults are subject to a test of resources (“means test”), however, in 2017, the Council used its powers under the Regulatory Reform Order 2002 to approve a Housing Assistance Policy for Independent Living which extends the scope of assistance that can be provided beyond the mandatory DFG criteria. The extended criteria aim to help more people maintain their independence safely at home, which also reduces pressures on health and social care services. Following a review of the policy, in 2019, the means test for stairlifts and ramps was removed allowing any disabled person with a referral from an OT to access this grant.
- 1.2 Since 2016/17, DFGs have been funded through the Better Care Fund, this significantly increased the amount awarded to Local Authorities (previously around £300,000 per year). Adaptions to Council owned homes are funded through the Council’s housing revenue account.
- 1.3 In 2020/21, the government allocation was £859,556, with a further £115,742 awarded in the last quarter of the year. Most adaptions are relatively small scale, with the average adaptation in 2020/21 costing £5,077. However, some cases, particularly for children, are becoming increasing complex.
- 1.4 The service has been provided “in house” since 2019, with installations undertaken by over 20 contractors drawn from a Lincolnshire Framework procured in 2019 and used by all districts. Stairlifts for South Kesteven residents are installed by one dedicated contractor. Prior to this, Lincolnshire Home Improvement Agency managed the casework and surveyor elements of the application. It is notable that since the service moved “in-house” performance has improved (see table 2). Salaries of officers associated with the delivery of the service are capitalised as permitted by the regulations.
- 1.5 The Covid19 pandemic has impacted on the delivery of DFGs. Technical surveys and installations were initially suspended, although the administrative aspects of processing applications continued as far as possible, enabling applications to be ready for survey or approved for installation as soon as restrictions allowed. OT referrals ceased for a period as their visits were also suspended. As restrictions were relaxed, site visits resumed with enhanced considerations for vulnerable residents and staff/contractors, however, delivery times increased over the year in some circumstances as a number of clients were shielding and chose to delay surveys/installation and contractors found issues obtaining some materials and staff shortages due to isolation requirements.
- 1.6 Despite the challenges brought about by the pandemic, 111 grants were approved, and 113 adaptations were completed in year representing a total spend of £613,890 (grants approved but not completed in the financial year carry over into the following year).
- 1.7 A summary of the DFGs completed during 2020/21 is in table 1 below (note, some properties received more than one adaption within the same grant approval).

Table 1: Adaptions completed 2020/21

<b>Adaptation Type</b>	<b>Number Completed</b>
Stairlift	32
Ramp	27
Level access shower	35
Extension	2
Garage conversion	1
Wash/dry toilet	7
Other e.g. door widening, kitchen adaptations etc.	22

1.8 The demand for DFGs is dependent on recommendations for adaptations from the Lincolnshire County Council Occupational Therapy team. Referrals in 2020/21 decreased on previous years, this was due to the impact of Covid19 on OT assessments. Notably, the applicant “dropout” rate decreased significantly in 2020/21 (see table 2). The reasons for this are varied but can include; applicant goes into care or passes away, applicant does not qualify due to level of income/savings, private rented landlord refuses permission or client cancels their application.

1.9 Outcomes for the previous 4 years are shown in table 2 below.

Table 2: Comparison data for last 4 years

	<b>Year</b>			
	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2019/20</b>	<b>2018/19</b>	<b>2017/18</b>
Number of recommendations	146	188	172	111
Number of cases cancelled/withdrawn	38 (26%)	76 (40%)	69 (40%)	53 (48%)
Number of grants approved	111	121	72	67
Number of adaptations completed	113	113	65	62

1.10 Into 2021/22, a countywide housing assistance policy is under development. This will result in a more consistent approach to the award of discretionary funding across the county. To further speed up processing times, the surveyor function (funded through the grant) provided by the Improvements and Repairs Team has been increased and remains under review and additional resource has been bought in to support the application process.

## **2 Consultation and Feedback Received, Including Overview and Scrutiny**

2.1 This report is for information only.

## **3 Available Options Considered**

3.1 This report is for information only.

## **4 Preferred Option**

4.1 This report is for information only.

## **5 Reasons for the Recommendation (s)**

5.1 To provide an update to the Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

## **6 Next Steps – Communication and Implementation of the Decision**

6.1 No further steps are proposed.

## **7 Financial Implications**

7.1 There are no direct financial considerations resulting from this report. Unspent budget from any year is carried forward for use in future years to enable demand to continue to be met. Government allocations are reviewed annually, therefore, there is no information on future allocation levels.

**Financial Implications reviewed by: Richard Wyles, Assistant Director of Finance and s151 Officer**

## **8 Legal and Governance Implications**

8.1 The principal legal provisions are contained in the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 and associated regulations. The maximum amount of DFG is currently set by statute at £30,000 and has been at this level since 2008.

8.2 The provision of discretionary assistance is detailed within the approved policy in accordance with The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002.

**Legal Implications reviewed by: Mandy Braithwaite, Legal Executive**

## **9 Equality and Safeguarding Implications**

9.1 As this report is for information there are no direct implications. However, the policy which provides the framework for the award of DFGs was subject to an Equality Impact Assessment.

## **10 Risk and Mitigation**

10.1 No significant risks have been identified.

## **11 Community Safety Implications**

11.1 No community safety implications have been identified.

## **12 How will the recommendations support South Kesteven District Council's declaration of a climate emergency?**

12.1 This report is for information.

### **13 Other Implications (where significant)**

13.1 None identified.

### **14 Background Papers**

14.1 [South Kesteven District Council Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy - Independent Living](#)

### **15 Appendices**

15.1 None.